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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (June – July 2006)
"Protecting your pets on the 4th of July"

Loud fireworks and Fourth of July barbecues add up to lost pets and visits to local animal shelters for owners who do not take precautions. Many frightened animals escape from their yards and end up running loose on the streets where they are picked up by Animal Care & Control Officers and taken to the San Bernardino County Animal Shelters in Big Bear and Devore in hopes that their owners will rescue them.

Animals do not understand fireworks. The loud bangs and bursts of light terrify them. The loud percussion vibrations from the fireworks hurt the ears of animals. Pets may jump through windows, over fences, break ropes, and run blindly in order to escape the fireworks.

The easiest way to keep your pets safe is to keep them inside. Bring them inside in the late afternoon **BEFORE** it starts to get dark. In addition, make sure that each pet wears a dog license, a cat registration tag, or some other form of identification at all times. Animals wearing county licenses on their collars and/or who have identification tags/microchips/tattoos are held at the county animal shelters for 10 days while shelter staff attempt to notify their owners either by phone or mail. Licenses are mandatory for all dogs four months of age and older. Cats who are four months of age and older may be voluntarily registered.

It is also recommended that someone stay with your pet if the fireworks upset them. If that is not possible, it is best to place your pet in a safe room with the TV or radio left on to help buffer the noise from the fireworks. For very excitable dogs, tranquilizers may be advisable, but a veterinarian must be consulted and the pet must be monitored.

If your pet does become lost, be sure to check **ALL** local animal shelters. Dogs may run for miles in terror. Pets do not understand county borders, so owners should check Riverside County shelters as well.

Check animal shelters in person every three days. Phone calls are not very useful because no one describes an animal in the same way. Do not give up hope if the animal is not found immediately since people sometimes hold found animals for a few days.

Pet owners looking for their animals can visit the Devore Animal Shelter at 19777 Shelter Way in Devore Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10-6:30, Wednesday 10-7, and Saturday and Sunday from 10-5 and the Big Bear Animal Shelter at 42080 North Shore Road and Stanfield Cutoff in Big Bear Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 10-5 and Wednesday from 12-7. You can also check the shelter's website for lost pets at www.sbcounty.gov/acc. For more information or to request service, please call the San Bernardino County Animal Care & Control Program toll free at 1-800-472-5609.

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